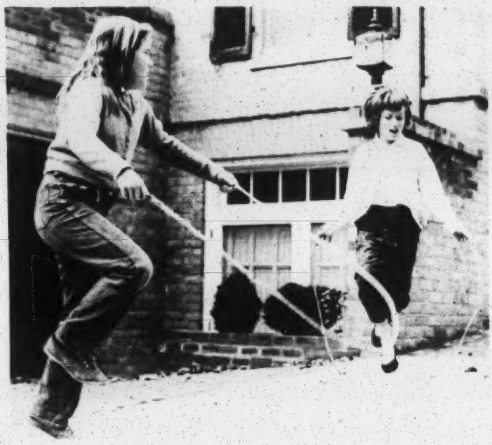
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

School Bulletin

NOVEMBER 13, 1961

"Tell her I'm a-goin' home"
pleads Jimmie Driftwood,
an Ozark singer of
AMERICAN FOLK SONGS



Story and Photographs
by Bates Littlehales
National Geographic Staff

FOLK SONGS – *Music of the People*

HOW MANY jump-rope songs do you know? Do you know "Charlie Chaplin went to France to teach the girls to hula dance" or "George Washington never told a lie"? You probably remember many more. In your section of the country you may sing songs that my children in Washington have never heard.

Have you ever wondered how these songs started? Who wrote them? Since no one sings them on radio or television, they must pass from person to person. You learn jump-rope songs from older children; in turn younger children learn them from you.

These songs are true folk songs, a kind of music that exists alongside our popular written music and classical written music.

Besides jump-rope ditties, you know many other types of folk songs, although you may not have known they were folk songs. Nowadays, with a growing interest in this kind of music, you may hear them on the radio or records, but originally they were songs given from person to person just by singing them, not written or recorded.

Home on the Range is one. Others you may know are *Tom Dooley, Red River Valley, Frankie and Johnny.*

You may remember others that your grandparents or parents sang to you when you were small, such as *Froggy Went a-Courtin'*, and *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie, Billy Boy, Billy Boy?*

In my childhood I learned *Go Tell Aunt Nancy.* My wife learned the same song as *Go Tell Aunt Hancy.* On most recordings today it is sung *Go Tell Aunt Rhody.* Which version is right? They all are. That's how it is with folk songs. You sing what you have heard and maybe change it a little to fit the time and place.

Before radio and television, people all over the country made their own music. They sang and

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played the guitar, banjo, harmonica, violin, and other instruments—especially persons who lived far from cities.

They entertained each other. They danced to this music, or used it to tell sad stories. In some parts of the United States, they still do.

In the hill country of Tennessee, just north of the Alabama line, I walked up to a little house set back from the road.

Fiddle music poured out and mixed with the chirping of the "hot bugs" in the trees and fields.

A white-haired man, violin in hand, came out to the porch and welcomed me in. It was Sunday afternoon, the week's chores were done, and Lum Thomas had opened his cabin to all the musicians and good listeners for miles around.

I heard lively square dance tunes and old stories set to music. Mrs. Thomas sang *Little Mohee,* which tells the tale of an Indian girl who was so kind to a British sailor in early America that he returned to this country after finding his sweetheart at home "couldn't compare with my Little Mohee."

Lum and others like him that I have heard in many out-of-the-way spots are keeping alive the old English ballads brought over in colonial days. They have learned these songs from parents and neighbors and have passed them on to their children.

HOEDOWN! Folk musicians play for a scene in the Old Mill Theater near Branson, Missouri. The man at left beats time on the jawbone of a mule.

HOMEMADE violins are shown a friend by Absie Morrison of Leslie, Arkansas. Morrison comes from a long line of fiddle makers. The last clan gathering included 40 violinists.

Scholars armed with tape recorders have "collected" these songs, and have learned how the same ballad has changed over the years—a little with each singer, growing to describe conditions in a new land.

Some of the same songs can still be heard in England today. They, too, have changed, and English scholars found that many English songs that had been entirely forgotten there still thrive in America.

Sometimes songs change so much that over the years they become nonsense. *Wildwood Flower,* for example, has a line that says: "I will twine with my mingles and wavy black hair." What does this mean? I haven't any idea, but it seems to belong perfectly to the music and it's fun to sing.

The music of these traditional songs is simpler than classical or even "pop." A finely trained voice is not necessary to sing them. All of us can tell stories and we add a little music to the telling. The words are the important part—and the fact that these folk songs are *our own* music, music we give each other, not just music given to us.

Many of the stories related in these songs are sad ones: unsuccessful love *(Barbara Allen),* disaster *(Sinking of the Titanic),* bravery in the face of death *(Casey Jones),* and murder *(Booth Killed Lincoln).*

The melodies and rhythms of folk songs form a simple music

LONGBOW, derived from the weapon, became an early instrument.

UMI

that appeals to people all over the world. I have swapped songs with stevedores in West Africa and on a tiny atoll in the South Pacific. We understood each other's music when we couldn't understand the languages.

If you are interested in collecting folk songs, I'll give you one for a starter. This cowboy song has never been published before. I collected it in the Black Hills of South Dakota from Mr. Badger Clark, who remembered it from his early days as a cowboy. It has no name that I know of. You could sing it to the tune of *On Top of Old Smoky.*

All day in the saddle on the prairie I ride,
Not even a dog, boys, to trot by my side.
My book is the trail; my bible the stones,
My preacher's a wolf on a pulpit of bones.
I wash in a puddle—I wipe on a sack,
And all of my wardrobe I wear on my back.
Yet all of my friends say I'm coming to grief
For a man must make money to buy women beef.
Why it is thusly I can't understand,
'Cause all of the patriarchs had a big brand.
Old Abraham immigrated in search of new range,
'Cause the water was scarce and he needed a change.
Isaac owned cattle in charge of Esau
And Jacob punched cows for his daddy-in-law.
Yet all of my friends say I'm coming to grief—
'Cause a man should make money to buy women beef.

Folk songs live on. Cowboys still sing to quiet cattle; soldiers when marching; children playing games; farmers plowing; sailors and miners at work. How many folk songs do *you* sing?

A MAN and his fiddle: Lum Thomas of Jasper, Tenn.

BOY and his banjo: The son of Jimmie Driftwood (see cover) keeps the family tradition going as he practices on an old banjo with a homemade neck near Timbo, Arkansas. The round sound box of the banjo amplifies the music, as does the mouth of the longbow player opposite.

Howell Walker, National Geographic Staff

ON THE FLOOR of Haleakala's huge crater, volcanic cinder cones rise 900 feet.

CAN YOU imagine a cowboy movie made on the moon? It might look very much like the scene at the right: a train of pack horses crossing empty land, with bare mountains behind them. To add a Western touch the landscape or "moonscape" is dotted with spindly, desertlike plants.

The horses, however, are a quarter of a million miles from the moon. They are on the island of Maui, in Hawaii, making their way across the crater of Haleakala (hä'lä-ä'kä-lä'), the largest extinct volcano in the world.

Our fiftieth state is a 1,600-mile string of tropical islands, decorated with brilliant flowers, palm trees, and foaming white surf. The sand is dazzling white on some beaches. On others, which are volcanic in origin, it is as black as coal.

Black sand is a key to Hawaii's history. Like the beaches, the islands were built by volcanoes.

Millions of years ago cracks opened in the floor of the Pacific. Hot lava gushed up. Through the years the volcanoes erupted again and again, building themselves up until they finally boiled up out of the sea.

Some of Hawaii's volcanoes are still active. Mauna Loa, on the island of Hawaii (the "big island"), erupts every few years, sometimes hurling rivers of lava down to the sea. In 1935 and again in 1942 a river of lava roared down toward the port of Hilo. Planes bombed the lava to help check its flow.

Kilauea, another great volcano on the island of Hawaii, is a favorite attraction for visitors. You can stand on the rim and watch the fireworks as the crater flares and rumbles.

UMI

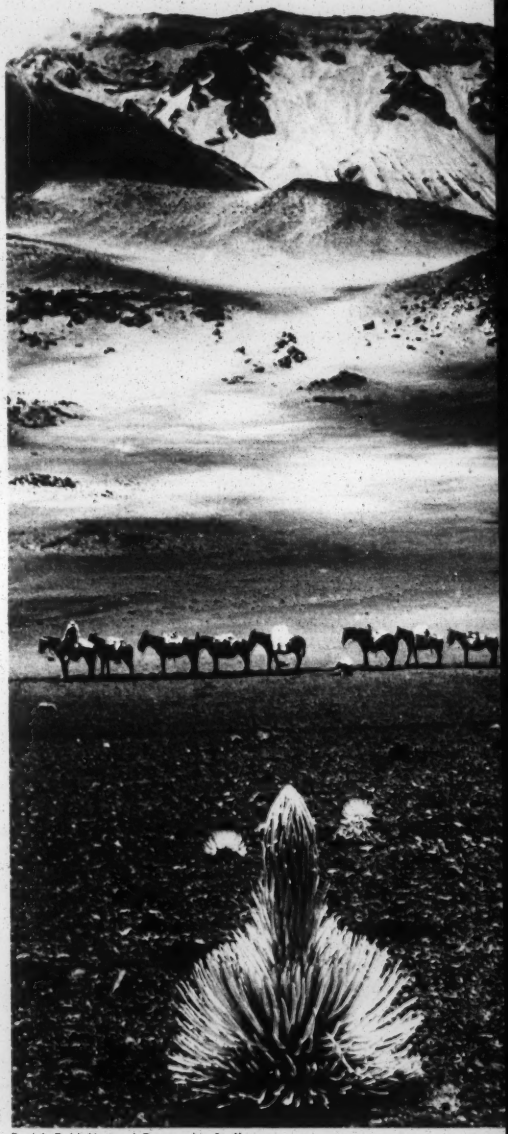
Sometimes Kilauea goes wild. Just last month the volcano erupted for two days, spewed 200 million cubic yards of lava, and forced the people of three Hawaiian villages to flee.

Maui, where Haleakala is located, is 30 miles northwest of the island of Hawaii. The park service has set aside 362 square miles around the volcanoes on Hawaii and Maui as a national park.

Haleakala means "The House of the Sun." Legend says that the sun ran too fast one day as it crossed the sky. The demigod, Maui, for whom the island is named, captured the sun's rays and tied them to a tree. To obtain its release the sun had to promise to shine longer here.

Haleakala has long been dead. The last lava flow is believed to have erupted in 1750, and it is perfectly safe now to travel across the crater. You go on foot or by horseback, winding half a mile down into the crater, which is seven miles long and two miles wide. The trail weaves through a flat stretch of lava, along bare cindery slopes that are decorated with glittering flowers, past deep cavities and cones of cinders piled 900 feet high.

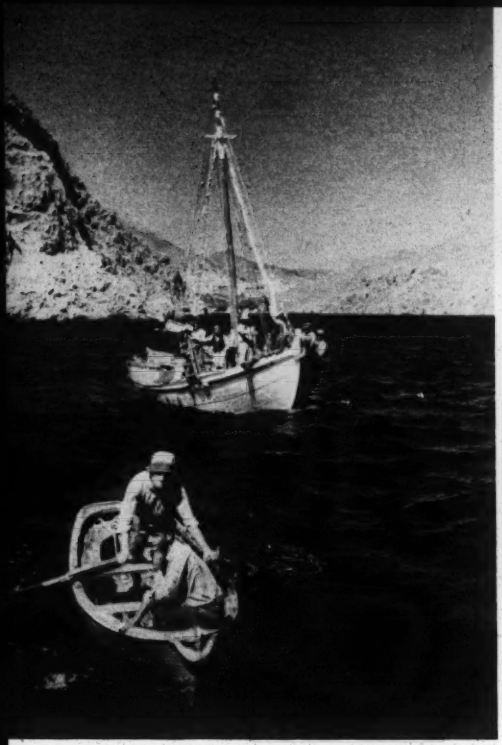
You may spend the night in the crater if you want to. The park service has provided three shelters for hikers and riders. And for outstanding travelers the rangers have a special award: a certificate of membership in "the Society of the Silversword, By Order of the Demigod Maui." Imagine that on your wall. W.G.



Paul A. Zahl, National Geographic Staff

PACK TRAIN halts briefly while crossing Haleakala crater. In the foreground glitters silversword, which is found nowhere else in the world. Growing as tall as a man, this rare plant blooms only once, with lovely purple flowers, then dies.

Sponge Fishing



Photographs by Franc Shor, National Geographic Staff

SPONGERS above fish the waters off the island of Simi, one of the Dodecanese. Waters around the Greek islands have been worked for so long that few sponges remain, but some vessels still fish the local grounds.

Below, the catch is rinsed. After drying, raw sponges are bleached in acid. They come out creamy white. To make them the familiar yellow, they are washed in sea water.

Artificial sponges supply most needs today.

THAT SPONGE your father uses to wash his car could be the skeleton of a sea animal.

At one time people thought sponges were plants. They do not move around as most animals do. They attach themselves to a rock, a piece of coral, or a sea shell under the ocean.

Sponges live in seas, oceans, lakes, and rivers throughout the world. The finest commercial sponges come from the warm waters of the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas.

In shallow water, men fish for sponges from glass-bottomed boats. They uproot the animals with hooks on long poles. In deeper waters, divers bring up the catch.

The sponges are sunned on deck until the black flesh decays and only the skeleton remains. Then they are hung to dry in the rigging. The returning ship looks like a giant Christmas tree hung with popcorn balls.

Greece, especially the Dodecanese Islands at the south of the Aegean Sea, has long been the home of sponge fishing. However, the industry is now fading away. Fewer youths follow their fathers to sea. Fishing grounds are depleted. Competition from artificial sponges has cut demand.

Bleak, rocky Kalimnos Island, the main sponge fishing base in the Aegean Sea, once sent 200 ships to sea for six months of each year. Today fewer than 100 sail out on the brilliant waters.

Declines in Greece

But the spirit of the undertaking is unchanged. The bells of 100 churches toll farewell on the May morning when the fleet sails. Women dance in gay costumes. Priests bless the ships, called *caiques,* which are hardly different from those that sailed the Mediterranean 2,000 years ago.

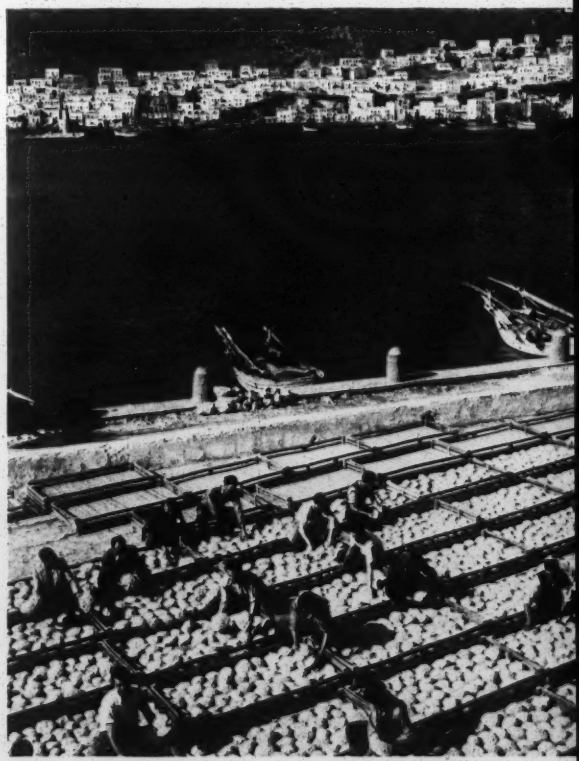
Then, as the broad-beamed caiques slowly circle the harbor in farewell and head south, the women tie on black kerchiefs which they wear until their men return in November.

Some of the men do not come back: they die in accidents. Those who dive too deeply or stay down too long may be crippled by the "bends," an intense pain in muscles and joints.

For several weeks the fishermen work Greek waters, then move south beyond Greece's largest island, Crete, toward North Africa. Some of the boats sail 4,000 miles before turning home.

About the turn of the century, sponge divers were needed in Florida to fish the Gulf of Mexico. Many came from Greek islands. They transplanted their diving suits, families, and customs to Tarpon Springs. Today Greek-Americans still fish the sponge-growing grounds off Florida's west coast. They moor brightly-painted boats with Greek names such as *Democratia, Socrates,* and *Poseidon* at Tarpon Springs wharves. Poseidon was the Greek god of the sea.

Man has used sponges since the beginning of recorded history. Ancient Greek soldiers padded their helmets with sponges. Mothers pacified crying babies with honey-soaked swabs. Medieval doctors prescribed the ashes of burned sponges for certain diseases and applied pulverized sponges to wounds. Science now sees the wisdom of the practice; sponges have been found to contain a lot of iodine.



Dimis A. Harissiadis

SPONGES dry in the sun at the quayside on the island of Kalimnos, one of the Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean Sea.

OFTEN I am asked why people are so concerned with the "balance of nature." Why should man care what happens to wildlife? Isn't man the boss on this planet, able to control things to his advantage, regardless of the rise or fall of animals and birds?

Conservationists say no, that man must observe natural laws or suffer the consequences.

Consider the starling, a black songbird with a lilac gloss much admired in its native England. In 1890-91, 100 were brought to the United States and set free in New York City's Central Park. They found American city life to their liking and multiplied so fast that today they cost us millions of dollars in cleaning bills. They seem to take special delight in roosting on and messing up public buildings and statues.

City officials—whether conservationists or not—will tell you that tampering with the balance of nature (by willfully introducing a new bird to the continent) was definitely harmful to man in the case of the starling.

Promoters introduced six pairs of nutria—a fur-bearing rodent—to Louisiana in 1939. Some escaped. Now their descendants overrun the marshes and bayous in the millions. They are pushing out the native muskrats, scaring away water birds, and eating crops.

Usually man upsets the balance of nature without trying. The current case of seagulls versus Gloucester, Massachusetts, is a near-tragic example.

These familiar birds, native American herring gulls, serve as "flying garbage men" of our shores, and had long been protected from hunters because of their excellent service to man. Gulls thrive on dead fish and sewage; man enjoys the benefits of a cleanly scavenged shoreline.

Then the human population started sky-rocketing. The gull population followed suit. More people produced more garbage and untreated sewage—more food for more gulls. Herring gulls began crowding out the roseate terns, laughing gulls, and other attractive species.

But more important, from the human point of view, was the situation reflected in these headlines:

Water Crisis in Gloucester
Pollution Closes Schools
Boil Water, Police Warn

Gloucester's main reservoir had been polluted. Police warned all residents to boil drinking and cooking water. Schools were closed. Water was rushed to hospitals by tank truck. Telephone operators alerted everyone in the phone book.

What had suddenly polluted Gloucester's water? Man's old friend, the herring gull. All those gulls, the health officers said, did the foul deed by winging between sewers and the reservoir, where they introduced sewage bacteria.

The circle was now complete: people had made more gulls by polluting the water the birds live on; the extra gulls, in turn, polluted the water the people live on.

LOOK AROUND

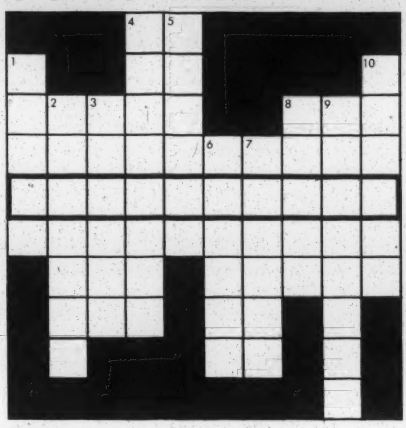
Irving Galinsky

A **tail** doesn't look very useful when the mouse is scurrying along the floor. But when there's some tricky climbing to be done, nothing is more handy.

Look around at some of the other uses animals find for their tails. The squirrel uses his brush as a balancer when climbing or jumping. Fish swim by tail-power. Woodpeckers clinging to tree trunks prop themselves up on strong tail feathers. The porcupine's tail is his defense—that's where the most dangerous quills are. The kangaroo, when resting, sits on his tail.

GEO-GRAPH

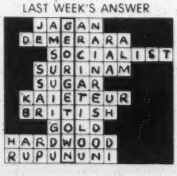
Solve the key word (heavy outline) to learn the name of the Greek islands where sponge fishermen live. All words are used in the sponge fishing story, pages 80-81.



DOWN

1. Pains afflicting deep divers
2. United States sponge fishing state
3. Sponges contain a lot of _____
4. Useful part of the sponge
5. Nation traditionally the home of sponge fishermen
6. Type of boat used by sponge fishermen
7. The sponge is not a plant but an _____
8. Greece's largest island
9. Greek sea god
10. Famous Greek sea where sponge fishing is practiced

LAST WEEK'S ANSWER



Sharks Prowl Farther North

Sharks seem to be moving north from their usual warm waters. Possibly warming ocean currents drive them. At any rate, serious attacks on swimmers have been reported off northern California and New England coasts.

An annual world-wide count of attacks on humans by sharks is now kept at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Last year's reported assaults totaled 30.

The shark is armed with a powerful jaw and mouth studded with rows of sharp, pointed teeth. It will eat anything. Tin cans, bricks, a fur coat, a sack of coal, an alarm clock, and a full-grown dog still wearing a collar have been found in shark stomachs.

Jerusalem: Another Divided City

The wall separating East and West Berlin recalls another divided city: Jerusalem, split between Israel and Jordan.

Here Arab and Jew keep an uneasy truce amidst monuments sacred to three great religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

The 1948 armistice between Jordan and Israel closed off all connections between the two sectors except one, the Mandelbaum Gate. Between the parts lies a no-man's-land, controlled by neither side.

Here Israel and Jordan are still technically at war, and soldiers will shoot anyone who trespasses. Only United Nations representatives, church leaders, and diplomats cross freely. But they must change their car license plates each time, for Jordan does not recognize Israel.

In one suburb, barbed wire separates neighbors, friends, and families. But they can wave and talk to one another, just as Berliners have been doing over the barricade there. (See *Geographic School Bulletin,* October 2, 1961.)

Calling all Geographers

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Albania, Tiny Satellite, Switches Big Brothers

THE LEADERS of Red China and Soviet Russia have had a falling out over "the least of their Communist brethren," tiny Albania. The scraggly Balkan land has switched big brothers and is now a satellite of China, devoted to the idea that Communism's enemies (us) must be destroyed by war. At the moment, Russia seems content to wear us down with "coexistence."

Albania is small—a little larger than Maryland. It holds about 1,625,000 people—half as many as Maryland. It is flanked by Yugoslavia, never a favorite in Moscow, and Greece, an ally of the United States.

Albanians call their nation *Shqiperia*, the land of the eagle. Most of it is high mountains. *Shqiptars*, or children of the eagle, as Albanians call themselves, have three poor choices of where to live: along the swampy Adriatic coast, on steep mountainsides, or in narrow valleys between the hills.

Though little of the land is fit for it, most Albanians live by farming. They work small plots, own few modern machines, and raise only enough food to keep body and soul together. Corn bread, olives, and goats' milk is the daily menu.

European Pictorial Press

A mosque rises beside Tiranë's broad but empty boulevards. Most Albanians are Moslems, a holdover from the rule of the Turks.

There is a textile factory in Tiranë, the capital and largest city (80,000 people). But most Albanians spin their own wool at home.

The mountains hold petroleum, copper, iron ore, and other resources. But roads through the highlands are needed to get this wealth, and the Albanians have never managed to build the roads.

Officials and foreign diplomats own most of the cars in Albania. The children of the eagle make their way on foot, by donkey cart, bicycle, or bus.

With aid from other Communist-bloc nations, Albania has been trying to modernize. The power stations and factories that mark a hopeful industrial nation are rising. But in the highlands, the people live as they always have.

The government urges everyone to pool herds and join collective farms. But the proud Albanians are slow to give up what little property they own, and the Communist program falters.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
School Bulletin
...from the School Service Division

Published each week during the school year by the National Geographic Society. Melville Bell Grosvenor, President.

November 13, 1961 **Vol. 40, No. 7**

IN THIS ISSUE—

- Folk Songs
- Hawaiian Volcano
- Greek Sponge Fishing

...and other features including Sharks, Jerusalem, Albania

Editor—Ralph Gray
Assistants—Arthur P. Miller Jr., Frank Sartwell, Liva Baker, Lea Ridgley

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NEXT WEEK—
Tower of London, Kuwait

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